

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method of controlling the rate of data transmission to a user via a communications link of a network wherein resource requests are communicated to a service provider. The resource requests are determined in accordance with an indication of the congestion level on the network and the user's defined parameters, such as their willingness to pay for the resource, wherein the resource request is weighted by a variable parameter, whose value is set in accordance with the congestion level on the network. This allows the rate controller to react efficiently and swiftly to network conditions as well as user defined parameters. By providing a computer programmed to act as a purchasing agent an automatic resource request to a service provider is enabled. An embodiment is described in which audio or video data is streamed to a user on the basis of the resource requests made on the user's behalf and is adjusted on the basis of user and network defined parameters. The invention could equally be used to provide appropriate data streaming for many different types of network traffic.